Case No.: NORTH-358G/A-2185 D1
Pat. Appln.

ACID IMPERVIOUS COATED METAL SUBSTRATE SURFACE AND METHOD OF PRODUCTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates in general to metal substrate surface coatings, and in particular to methodology and coated products therefrom for rendering a surface of a metal substrate substantially acid impervious by depositing a mixture of a high-temperature resistant polymer particulate such as polyamide particulate and a curable powder adhesive on the surface of the metal substrate and thereafter curing the adhesive to thereby adhere the polyamide particulate as a film on the surface.

Background of the Invention

In certain applications it is necessary to provide a substantially acid-impervious metal substrate that comes into contact with another substrate whose chemical acidity acts to leach any available iron from the metal substrate. One important application is found in curing fixtures used to fabricate polymer composite resin-impregnated parts. In particular, resin-impregnated fiber of polymer composite material is placed on a steel curing fixture to give parts made therefrom a desired shape. The composite material is

vacuum-bagged to the steel fixture and cured in an autoclave at an elevated temperature, all as known in the art. However, certain high-temperature polymer composite materials that cure above about 500°F will corrode the steel fixture while contemporaneously producing a bad part that exhibits undesirable reduced oxidative properties and high porosity.

It has been found that the reason for the above described corrosion and poor product yield is due to acid from the composite material acting to leach iron from the steel fixture. Because of the resulting untoward effect, it is most important to block acid passage into the fixture to thereby prevent iron leaching into the fabricated part. Accordingly, a primary object of the present invention is to provide methodology for providing a coating to a metal surface such as the surface of a steel curing fixture to thereby render that surface substantially acid impervious.

Another object of the present invention is to provide such methodology wherein the coating is deposited on the metal surface as a mixture of high-temperature resistant polymer particulate such as a polyamide particulate and a curable powder adhesive which thereafter is cured to adhere the polymer particulate as an acid impervious coating on the surface.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide an acid impervious steel curing fixture having a high-temperature resistant polymer particulate coating thereon

which is temperature resistant up to about 700°F.

These and other objects of the present invention will be apparent throughout the description thereof which now follows.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention is a method of rendering a surface of a metal substrate substantially acid impervious. The method comprises first placing the surface in a field of treatment, then depositing a mixture of a high-temperature ~~resistant~~ acid-impervious polymer particulate such as polyamide particulate and a curable powder adhesive on the surface, and finally subjecting the surface-coated metal substrate to a curing treatment sufficient to cure the powder adhesive and thereby adhere the polymer particulate as a film on the surface. Preferably, the polymer particulate is ~~temperature resistant~~ acid impervious up to about 700°F, while the powder adhesive in all cases of course cures below the ~~temperature resistant~~ acid-impervious level of the polymer particulate.

A steel substrate coated in accord with the present methodology is particularly useful as a curing fixture upon which resin-impregnated fiber of polymer composite material is placed to thereby give molded parts made therefrom a desired shape. Production of a part is accomplished by vacuum bagging the composite material to the steel fixture and curing the so-produced part in place on the fixture in an autoclave at an elevated temperature. In this manner the acid impervious curing fixture of the present invention allows production of

composite parts without the danger of leaching iron from the fixture to thus assure full-utility part fabrication.

Brief Description of the Drawings

An illustrative and presently preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a flow diagram of preferred methodology in fabricating a coated curing fixture; and

Figure 2 is a flow diagram of preferred methodology for fabricating a composite-material part employing a coated curing fixture of Figure 1.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment

While a surface of substantially any metal substrate is a candidate for the coating of the present invention, the preferred embodiment addresses fabrication of a steel curing fixture employed in the production of composite parts made from material that has an acid content and that is cured while in contact with the steel curing fixture.

Referring to Figure 1, preferred methodology for fabricating a steel curing fixture whose surface has an acid impervious coating first involves placement of the fixture in a field of treatment. Preferably, this field of treatment permits an electrostatic deposition environment and therefore either charges or grounds the steel fixture as known in the

art so that charged deposition material is electrically attracted to the fixture. The acid impervious coating provided by preferred methodology initially comprises a ~~high-temperature-tolerant~~ polymer particulate, most preferably a polyamide particulate, and a non-cured powder adhesive preferably heat-curable, with such heat curing occurring at a temperature below ~~the~~ acid high temperature ~~tolerance~~ of the polymer particulate. The most preferred polyamide for particulate production is KAPTON, manufactured by DuPont Co., Wilmington, Delaware, which is acid-impervious ~~temperature-resistant~~ up to about 700°F. If the polymer is available in film form only, the film first must be chopped to produce a particulate wherein, most preferably, each particle thereof has a total surface area of about 0.008 square inch. Preferred adhesive powder is a conventional polyamide powder adhesive that heat-cures at a temperature below about 650°F and is acid-impervious ~~temperature-resistant~~ up to about 700°F.

A mixture of high-temperature acid impervious ~~resistant~~ polymer particulate and powder adhesive is prepared such that sufficient particulate is provided to cover the surface to be coated and sufficient adhesive is present to maintain particulate adhesion to the surface. This mixture preferably is deposited electrostatically on the surface of the steel curing fixture, after which the fixture is placed in an oven or autoclave or otherwise heated to the curing temperature of the powder adhesive to thereby cause adherence of the

polyamide particulate as a coating. As illustrated in Figure 2, the steel fixture so produced is acid impervious to thereby permit contact of resin-impregnated fiber of polymer composite material subsequently vacuum bagged about the fixture and thereon cured at an elevated temperature to thus fabricate composite parts.

While an illustrative and presently preferred embodiment of the invention has been described in detail herein, it is to be understood that the inventive concepts may be otherwise variously embodied and employed and that the appended claims are intended to be construed to include such variations except insofar as limited by the prior art.